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PROVIDER ADVOCATES

Writing a letter to a member of Congress

As a health care provider who treats patients with obesity, you have the power to make a difference by sharing about how the lack of access to obesity treatments negatively impacts your patients and your ability to provide vital care.

Who is my elected official?

To identify the House representative for your district, type your zip code into this search engine. Once you’ve identified your House representative, find his or her mailing address by searching on this page.

To identify your state Senators and find their mailing addresses, visit this page and select your state from the dropdown menu.

The following standard address can also be used for contacting your Senators:

The Honorable (Name)
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Urge your member of Congress to take action and support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act by sending a personalized letter through Quorum.
Sample advocacy letter

Use the letter below to write to your elected official and urge them to support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act.

Date
Your Full Name
Your Full Address
Your City, State and Zip
Your Phone Number with Area Code
Your Email Address

The Honorable [Insert Elected Official’s Name Here]
Elected Official’s Address
Elected Official’s City, State, Zip

Dear [Senator XX or Representative XX (House)],

I am a practicing gastroenterologist living in [city/state]. I am also a member of the American Gastroenterological Association [or insert practice area if not gastroenterologist, i.e., As a constituent and practicing primary care provider], which advocates for legislative and regulatory policy that improves GI patient care and research.

I am writing to urge you to support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act: (H.R. 4818, S. 2407), which reintroduced in Congress. Nearly 42% of American adults have obesity — and obesity rates continue to increase rapidly — but current Medicare rules deny access to effective obesity care for millions of Americans.

The Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would expand much needed Medicare coverage to include prescription drugs for chronic weight management, behavioral counseling, and other prevention and treatment options. Passage of this legislation could lead to increased obesity care coverage for all Americans since many private insurance companies model their covered health benefits to reflect Medicare beneficiaries.

Every day I see firsthand the urgent need for expanded access to affordable, effective obesity care for my patients with serious health conditions related to obesity, including [insert relevant health conditions (i.e., nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, heart disease, cancer, etc.)].

[Expand on your experience treating patients with obesity; share any examples of how insurance coverage limitations have prevented your patients from undergoing your recommended course of treatment and the subsequent health ramifications, if applicable].

Passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would empower health care providers like me to better assist my patients in managing their weight, thereby greatly improving their health through expanded access to treatment options.

This issue has far-reaching economic implications beyond my personal experience. If current trends continue, the economic impact of a high body mass index could reach an astounding $4.32 trillion annually, according to a March 2023 report by The Obesity Federation.

We urgently need to change the way we view and care for obesity — and the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act is an important first step.

Can I count on you to support the passage of the legislation?

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Full Name]
PROVIDER ADVOCATES

Writing an op-ed

What is an op-ed?
An op-ed is a short article in a news outlet’s editorial section written to express an opinion or viewpoint to the community. Op-eds can be useful tools to change public opinion and spread awareness for how people think about obesity.

General tips:

• Research the news outlet to which you want to submit an op-ed.
• Make sure your article is within its guidelines and writing style.
• Keep your main message to the point. Many news outlets have a 400-600 word limit.
• Include your personal connection to the issue as well as your credentials/areas of expertise as a health care provider.
• Include research or facts to support your point of view.
• Look up the editor’s email address on the website and send in your writing.
• Accept small changes the editor may want to make to ensure proper grammar and writing style.
• Don’t give up! Try another news outlet if the first one does not accept your submission.
Obesity is not a lifestyle choice

As a practicing gastroenterologist who treats patients with obesity, I have seen firsthand the harmful impacts of the false assumption that obesity is the result of lifestyle choices. In reality, obesity is a serious and complex disease that negatively impacts my patients’ mental, physical and emotional health. Obesity is a chronic medical condition that requires a multidisciplinary approach for prevention and successful treatment.

Nearly 42% of Americans adults have obesity — and obesity rates continue to increase rapidly — yet it remains misunderstood as a disease. Many believe it can be cured with more willpower, diet and exercise — this is false. Research has proven that obesity is a chronic medical condition that impacts multiple systems of the body — cardiovascular, endocrine, psychological and gastroenterological — to name just a few. This was further supported in 2013 when the American Medical Association recognized obesity as a disease. The evidence is clear: effectively treating and managing obesity requires a more nuanced, multifaceted approach.

Many people living with obesity believe their treatment options are limited to lifestyle changes or surgery, but there is actually a comprehensive spectrum of treatment options available. Unfortunately, many effective weight-loss programs, services and treatments are not covered by insurance plans. To add insult to injury, current Medicare rules deny access for millions of Americans to some of the most effective obesity care. That means that countless people are unable to access the care they vitally need.

[Expand on your experience treating patients with obesity, the connection between obesity and other health conditions, and any instances in which patients were unable to undergo your recommended course of treatment due to insurance coverage limitations, and the subsequent health ramifications, if applicable. Also include any reference to obesity rates in your city/state.]

Obesity also has far-reaching economic consequences for our society. According to a March 2023 report by The Obesity Federation, the economic impact of the disease could reach $4.32 trillion annually if current trends continue.

It’s time to change how we view and manage obesity in the U.S. The Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would expand Medicare coverage to include prescription drugs for chronic weight management, behavioral counseling, and other prevention and treatment options. Because many private insurance companies model their covered health benefits to reflect Medicare coverage, the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act could lead to increased obesity care coverage for all Americans.

This legislation would be a critically important first step in the right direction. It’s time to take action – reach out to your elected officials and encourage them to support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act.
Calling a member of Congress

Calling your member of Congress is a useful way to ask for expanded access to obesity treatment and care. Keep in mind that Congressional office phones are often answered by staff, who will take your message and share your concerns with your elected official.

Who is my elected official?

Make sure you are reaching out to the appropriate elected official by using the tools below.

To identify the House representative for your district, type your zip code into this search engine.

To identify your state Senators, visit this page and select your state from the dropdown menu.

Once you have identified your elected officials, telephone numbers for Congressional offices can be found on the House and Senate websites.

Tips for the phone call

Below are general tips to keep in mind when calling a member of Congress.

- Be patient. Keep trying until you get a person to pick up.

- Introduce yourself, including your name, where you live, and your credentials and areas of expertise as a health care provider.

- Establish why your issue is important and the perspective you offer as a health care provider.

- Ask your member of Congress to take action.

- Thank the staffer for their time and consideration.
Sample phone call script
Below is a sample script to reference when calling your representative regarding obesity care and the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act.

Treating obesity requires more than diet and exercise
- Hi, my name is [First Last, include credentials], I am a practicing gastroenterologist [or insert practice area, i.e., primary care provider] calling from [City/State].
- I'm calling [Senator XX or Representative XX (House)] to urge him/her to support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act: (H.R. 4818, S. 2407), which has just been reintroduced in Congress. Obesity is a complex, chronic and misunderstood disease and needs to be addressed through legislation. Nearly 42% of Americans adults have obesity, and the rate of the disease continues to increase rapidly.
- The Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would expand Medicare coverage to include screening and treatment of obesity from a diverse range of health care providers who specialize in obesity care, as well as include coverage of prescription drugs for long-term weight management, behavioral counseling, and other prevention and treatment options.
- Because many private insurance companies model their covered health benefits to reflect Medicare coverage, the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act could lead to increased obesity care coverage for all Americans.
- As a gastroenterologist [or insert practice area (i.e., primary care provider, etc.)], every day I see firsthand the urgent need for expanded access to affordable, effective obesity care for my patients, many of whom suffer from health conditions related to obesity, including [insert relevant health conditions (i.e., gastroesophageal reflux disease, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes mellitus, weight related arthritis etc.)].
- With the right tools, health care providers like me can help patients manage their weight and improve their health. The Treat and Reduce Obesity Act would make this management more efficient, affordable and accessible.
- [Expand on your personal experience treating patients with obesity and cite specific examples of how insurance limitations have prevented your patients from undergoing your recommended course of treatment, if applicable].
- Can I count on [Congressional legislator’s name] to support the passage of the Treat and Reduce Obesity Act?

If you are told “no” or receive a noncommittal response:
- Thank you for your time and consideration.

If you are told “yes” or that the staffer will pass along the message:
- Thank you for your support.